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COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES
Organizational session for 1997

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION FOR 1997

1. Adoption of the agenda for the organizational session for 1997.

2. Election of officers.

3. Organization of work for 1997.

4. Programme of work for 1997.

5. Adoption of the agenda for the substantive session of 1997.

6. Other business.

ANNOTATIONS

1. Adoption of the agenda for the organizational session for 1997

2. Election of officers

Rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly provides that committees other than Main Committees shall elect a Chairman, one or more Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. These officers shall be elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, experience and personal competence.

In past years, the Committee on Conferences has elected, in addition to the Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur.

At its organizational session for 1989, on 1 March 1989, the Committee agreed in principle that henceforth the chairmanship would rotate annually among the regional groups.

3. Organization of work for 1997

At its 341st meeting, on 27 August 1992, the Committee on Conferences decided to maintain its biennial programme of work, dealing with items relating to documentation in even-numbered years and those relating to meetings in odd-numbered years. The Committee also decided that some items would be considered on an annual basis.

At its organizational session for 1996, on 1 February 1996, the Committee adopted its agenda for 1996 and requested the Secretariat to submit a draft agenda for 1997 to the Committee at its organizational session for 1997.

In paragraph 4 of its resolution 46/190 A of 20 December 1991, the General Assembly took note of the guidelines adopted by the Committee on Conferences with regard to inter-sessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences and meetings.[1] At its substantive session of 1994, the Committee decided that requests for inter-sessional departures submitted to the Committee should, in future, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action. At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee decided that requests for inter-sessional departures submitted to the Committee that involve a change of venue should be referred to the members for approval. Departures that involve other types of changes should, as the Committee had decided at its substantive session of 1994, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action.

Moreover, meetings of the Committee may be required in compliance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 35/10 A of 3 November 1980, by which all proposals affecting the schedule of conferences and meetings made at sessions of the Assembly shall be reviewed by the Committee when administrative implications are being considered under the requirements of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly.

4. Programme of work for 1997

The terms of reference of the Committee are set forth in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B of 21 December 1988. As noted above, the Committee adopted its agenda for 1996 at its organizational session for 1996 and requested the Secretariat to present a draft agenda for 1997 to the Committee at its organizational session for 1997.

Annexed to the present document is the draft agenda for 1997, followed by annotations, which takes into account the earlier decisions of the Committee and subsequent decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly. The Committee may also wish to determine the timing and duration of its substantive session of 1997 and to specify the documentation requirements.

5. Adoption of the agenda for the substantive session of 1997

6. Other business

Notes

[1] Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/46/32 and Corr.1 and Add.1), para. 77.

ANNEX

Draft agenda for the substantive session of 1997

1. Adoption of the agenda.

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings:

   (a) Adoption of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 1998-1999;

   (b) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources:

      (i) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs;

      (ii) Consultations with bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them;

      (iii) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States;

      (iv) Cost-accounting system for conference services;

      (v) Subsidiary bodies authorized to meet away from their established headquarters in accordance with section I, paragraph 4, of General Assembly resolution 40/243;

      (vi) Improved coordination of conference services;

   (c) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243;

   (d) Consideration of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings of subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council for 1998-1999.

3. Control and limitation of documentation:

   (a) Implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/206 C;

   (b) Provision of written meeting records to subsidiary organs of the General Assembly;

   (c) Review of document requirements of Member States and the Secretariat;

   (d) Access to the optical disk system by developing countries;

   (e) Translation-related matters;

   (f) Comprehensive survey by the Joint Inspection Unit of the role publications play in implementing mandates of intergovernmental bodies

and the extent to which recurrent publications could be made more cost-effective in this regard.

4. Review of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999: Conference services.

5. Adoption of the report.

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Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings:

(a) Adoption of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 1998-1999

The Committee on Conferences will submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 1998-1999.

A draft biennial calendar will be submitted by the Secretariat to the Committee at its substantive session of 1997.

Moreover, in paragraph 18 of its resolution 46/190 of 20 December 1991, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its forty-seventh session and as appropriate at subsequent sessions, through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a consolidated statement relating to the number and costs of scheduled special conferences, bearing in mind the annual limit of five as set out in resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985 and endorsed by the Assembly in its resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986. If the proposed United Nations conference on the establishment of an International Criminal Court is scheduled in 1998, a report on the matter will be submitted to the Committee.

(b) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources:

(i) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs

Since 1983, the Committee on Conferences has studied a series of reports showing the meeting statistics of a number of United Nations organs in New York, Geneva and Vienna. In accordance with paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 48/222 A of 23 December 1993, the information includes analyses of trends and figures on the utilization of conference-servicing capacity.

In compliance with the foregoing requests, the Secretariat will submit to the Committee at its substantive session of 1997 a report on meeting statistics of United Nations organs.

In addition, at its substantive session of 1994, the Committee on Conferences requested the Secretariat to submit to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, through the Committee, a synoptic table by sector of meetings held during the biennium 1992-1993 and 1994-1995 (using projections for the second half of 1995), including the notional cost of conference services provided, as well as a breakdown of meeting services and documentation costs.

At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee took note of the synoptic report and requested the Secretariat to refine the methodology used in drafting the report and to continue to provide such information to the Committee at its future sessions. At its organizational session for 1996, the Committee decided to defer until 1997 its consideration of the synoptic table so as to enable the Secretariat to complete the data for 1995, and provide actual data for 1996 and the first half of 1997 and projections for the second half of 1997.

The synoptic table will be submitted to the Committee as part of the aforementioned report on meeting statistics.

(ii) Consultations with bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them

At its substantive session of 1996, the Committee requested its Chairman to continue to consult on its behalf with the chairmen of bodies that had consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure (80 per cent) of their allocated resources for the past three sessions, with a view to making appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources.

The Committee further requested its Chairman to transmit a letter to the chairmen of subsidiary bodies that had utilized less than 80 per cent of their conference-servicing resources in 1996 to invite them to report on measures taken to improve their utilization of those resources and realistically to assess their need for such resources, with a view to reducing the conference resources requested.

The Secretariat will provide an oral report on the aforementioned consultations and on the replies received from the chairmen of the subsidiary bodies concerned.

Moreover, in paragraph 10 of its resolution 51/211 A of 18 December 1996, the General Assembly requested the bodies that have not fully utilized their meeting entitlements, including the duration of their sessions, to review their meeting entitlements and to report the results of their review to the General Assembly through the Committee on Conferences. In paragraph 12, the Assembly reiterated its request to the Committee, in consultation with the organs concerned, to examine the cases where the utilization factor is lower than the established benchmark figure for at least three sessions, with a view to reporting on problems and factors that have given rise to such a situation, and to make appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources.

The Secretariat will submit a written report on the aforementioned matters.

(iii) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

In paragraph 19 of its resolution 51/211 A, the General Assembly reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to provide, within the resources requested for conference services for the biennium 1998-1999, interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States upon request by those groupings, taking into account the priority due to meetings included in the calendar of conferences and meetings, and to submit a report on the implementation of that decision to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session through the Committee on Conferences.

The Secretariat will present an oral report on the matter.

(iv) Cost-accounting system for conference services

In paragraph 1 of its resolution 51/211 C of 18 December 1996, the General Assembly strongly urged the Secretary-General to develop the cost-accounting system for conference services no later than the 1997 substantive session of the Committee on Conferences, having recourse to voluntary and internal expertise within the United Nations system.

The Secretariat will present a report on the cost-accounting system at the substantive session of 1997.

Moreover, in paragraph 2 the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report through the Committee on Conferences to each subsidiary organ of the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the cost of conference services it utilized in the year concluded in order to enable those organs to plan more effectively. The Committee may wish to consider the report in question before it is submitted to the General Assembly.

(v) Subsidiary bodies authorized to meet away from their established headquarters in accordance with section I, paragraph 4, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

In paragraph 8 of its resolution 51/211 A the General Assembly invited all its subsidiary bodies that are authorized to meet away from their established headquarters to review, in the interests of improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness, the exception to the headquarters rule in the light of the current situation of their work, and to make recommendations thereon through the Committee on Conferences to the Assembly at its fifty-second session.

In paragraph 9 the Assembly also invited the Economic and Social Council to request all its subsidiary bodies to carry out the same review referred to in the preceding paragraph.

The Secretariat will submit a written report on subsidiary bodies authorized to meet away from their established headquarters.

(vi) Improved coordination of conference services

At its substantive session of 1995 the Committee decided to consider on a biennial basis the means to ensure the improved coordination of conferences within the United Nations system. Moreover, it requested Conference Services to maintain an active dialogue with the substantive secretariats of intergovernmental bodies, providing statistics and information on previous performance, as well as guidelines on ways and means to enhance utilization of conference-servicing resources. At its substantive session of 1996 the Committee endorsed the idea of the Secretariat to make the active dialogue a permanent coordination feature, and directed that such action should be taken at Headquarters, as well as at the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Vienna.

In addition, in paragraph 15 of its resolution 51/211 A the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure closer cooperation between Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi in order to improve the coordination of conference services. In paragraph 16, the Assembly requested the Secretariat to engage, on a regular basis, in an active dialogue with Member States as a permanent feature at Headquarters, as well as at the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi, in order to improve the coordination of conference services.

The Secretariat will present an oral report on the matter.

(c) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

In paragraph 15 of its resolution 47/202 A of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly demanded that all subsidiary organs of the Assembly comply with the provisions of section I, paragraph 7, of its resolution 40/243, by which it had decided that no subsidiary organ of the Assembly may meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by it.

In accordance with the procedure established by the Committee at its 1986 session, and reaffirmed at its 1992 session, chairmen of subsidiary organs of the General Assembly that wish to meet at Headquarters during regular sessions of the Assembly submit their requests to the Chairmen of the Committee on Conferences.

A conference room paper will be prepared by the Secretariat so that the Committee may consider requests received in this regard.

(d) Consideration of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings of subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council for 1998-1999

The Economic and Social Council, in adopting its decision 1988/103 of 5 February 1988, invited the Committee to review the Council's draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings and to submit, as appropriate, its

recommendations thereon to the Council. The draft calendar for the biennium 1998-1999, which is to be presented to the Council at its substantive session in June-July 1997, is expected to be available for consideration by the Committee in June 1997. The Committee may wish to consider meeting at that time in order to discuss the draft and to convey its observations to the Council.

3. Control and limitation of documentation:

(a) Implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/206 C

In paragraph 5 of its resolution 51/211 B of 18 December 1996, the General Assembly reiterated its recommendations on control and limitation of documentation made to intergovernmental bodies in resolution 50/206 C of 23 December 1995, and requested intergovernmental bodies to report to it through the Committee on Conferences on measures taken in order to implement that resolution.

The Secretariat will submit a written report on the matter at the substantive session of 1997.

(b) Provision of written meeting records to subsidiary organs of the General Assembly

In paragraph 3 of its resolution 50/206 B of 23 December 1995, the General Assembly noted the intention of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to replace its verbatim records by unedited transcripts, and requested the Committee to keep the Assembly informed, through the Committee on Conferences, of the experience of that body regarding unedited transcripts. In addition, in paragraph 4, it took note of the decision of the Committee on Conferences contained in paragraph 75 of its report to the Assembly (Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/50/32 and Add.1-2)), and requested the Committee to report on the implementation of that decision to the Assembly at its fifty-first session.

In paragraph 6 of its resolution 51/211 B, the General Assembly requested the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to continue to keep it informed, through the Committee on Conferences, of its experience with the use of unedited transcripts. In paragraph 7, the Assembly took note of the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences contained in paragraph 89 of its report to the General Assembly (Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/51/32 and Corr.1 and Add.1)), and requested the Committee to report to the Assembly on the implementation of that decision at its fifty-second session.

The Secretariat will present an oral report on the matter at the substantive session of 1997.

(c) Review of document requirements of Member States and the Secretariat

In paragraph 2 of its resolution 51/211 B, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to invite Member States to review their document requirements in order to identify the number and types of documents

with a view to reducing, where possible, the number and types of documents requested. In paragraph 3, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to review the Secretariat's internal requirements in order to avoid a surplus of documents provided in the Secretariat.

The Secretariat will present an oral report on the matter.

(d) Access to the optical disk system by developing countries

In paragraph 3 of its resolution 50/206 D of 23 December 1995, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to present proposals to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session through the Committee on Conferences on facilitating access by developing countries to the optical disk system in all official languages, taking into account the possible savings from reduced copying and distribution costs.

In paragraph 4 of its resolution 51/211 C, the General Assembly strongly urged the Secretary-General to provide proposals at the first resumed session of the Fifth Committee, in accordance with paragraph 3 of its resolution 50/206 D, taking into account the possible savings from reduced reproduction and distribution costs. The Committee on Conferences may wish to be informed of these developments.

(e) Translation-related matters

In paragraph 1 of its resolution 51/211 D of 18 December 1996, the General Assembly noted the efforts made by the translation services to improve the quality of translation of documents in all six official languages of the Organization, and encouraged those services to continue to spare no effort to that end and to continue to report to the Committee on Conferences on additional efforts made in that regard.

The Secretariat will present an oral report on translation-related matters.

(f) Comprehensive survey by the Joint Inspection Unit of the role publications play in implementing mandates of intergovernmental bodies and the extent to which recurrent publications could be made more cost-effective in this regard

In paragraph 10 of its resolution 50/206 C the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that the Joint Inspection Unit be requested to conduct a comprehensive survey of the role publications play in implementing mandates of intergovernmental bodies and the extent to which recurrent publications could be made more cost-effective in this regard.[a] In paragraph 14 of its resolution 51/211 B the Assembly reiterated its request to the Joint Inspection Unit to conduct the comprehensive survey in question.

The Secretariat will report on implementation of the aforementioned request at the substantive session of 1997.

4. Review of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999: Conference services

At its 327th meeting, on 12 June 1991, the Committee decided to review the relevant programme narrative of the proposed programme budget for Conference Services, and to provide its views thereon to the General Assembly.

In the light of that decision, the Secretariat will submit to the Committee, for consideration at its substantive session of 1997, the relevant programme narrative of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999: Conference services.

5. Adoption of the report

Notes

[a] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 7 and corrigendum (A/50/7 and Corr.1), para. 83.